NINE DAYS' PRAYER TO ST. DYMPHNA

Dear Friend of St. Dymphna

Neither God nor His saints are impressed by long prayers, or by elegance of language. During His life on earth Christ showed His preference for those in need, for the lowly, and for the weak, and so much so that He was often accused of favoring sinners.

God always gives ear to the prayers of sinners such as we all are without exception. As a wise and holy monk once said, "The more we pray, the better it goes." The prayers included here are intended only as a guide so that you may frequently turn to St. Dymphna to ask her aid in prayer. If you prefer to do so, please use your own words, or pray without any or many words at all.

You can be sure that God will listen to your sincere prayer to His saints since all prayers are ultimately addressed to Him through them.

As you pray, we ask a remembrance for the many needs of our Franciscan missionaries, and their people especially the children. Please remember, too, the intentions of all your Franciscan Mission Associates.

Fr. Bernard, ofm.

Director

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

It is you we honor and worship, all-powerful and all-merciful God, when we venerate your saints. Our many sins, faults, and failings keep us ever conscious of our need for the help of the blessed.

In the example of your saints we find greater reason to trust completely in your goodness. By imitating their example and by calling on them we can surely count on their aid in our necessities.

In these nine days of prayer in honor of St. Dymphna we seek, most loving Father, your grace and favor. Through Christ, our Lord, we ask it! *Amen.*

DAILY NOVENA PRAYER

Lord God, you chose St. Dymphna as patroness of those afflicted with mental and nervous disorders. You made her a sign of hope for all who ask her aid. Grant, then, through the prayers of this young martyr, relief to all who suffer especially those we now pray for. *(Please mention those you wish to aid.)*

Kindly accept, merciful Father, the prayers of St. Dymphna for them. Please give them, patience in their pain, and fill them with hope for the relief they seek. In the name of Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

FIRST DAY

Intention: FAITH

Prayer: Dear St. Dymphna, you gave us an example in your own life of firm faith. Neither flattery, earthly rewards, nor the threat of death caused you to waver in your fidelity to God. Please help us then, amid the uncertainties of life to imitate your wholehearted dedication to Christ. Be good enough to come to our aid in our need, and pray for us to God. *Amen.*

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

Thought: God gives an increase in faith whenever we ask Him for this precious gift.

Practice: You prove your faith in Christ's promises by your daily actions. Please do so today at least once.

SECOND DAY

Intention: HOPE

Prayer: Good St. Dymphna, you placed all your hope in Christ's promises, and sacrificed even your life in that hope. The Lord, God, rewarded your constancy by making your name known and loved over many centuries by the thousands whom you have aided in time of difficulty. Please assist us now in our present necessity, and intercede before God for our intentions. Obtain for us a firm hope like your own in God's unfailing protection. *Amen.*

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

Thought: In His goodness God never abandons those who place all their trust in Him.

Practice: Say often today, "My God, we place all our hope in your goodness," and mean it.

THIRD DAY

Intention: CHARITY

Prayer: You are celebrated, St. Dymphna, for your goodness to others. Both in your lifetime, and even more in the ages since, you have again and again demonstrated your concern for those who are mentally disturbed or emotionally troubled. Kindly secure for me, then, some measure of your own serene love, and ask our Lord to give us a share in His life and boundless charity. *Amen.*

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

Thought: The highest form of worship we can pay to God is to love Him for His own sake, and our neighbors as ourselves.

Practice: The degree of our love of God is shown in the love we have for those people we most dislike. Love them for God's sake and your own.

FOURTH DAY

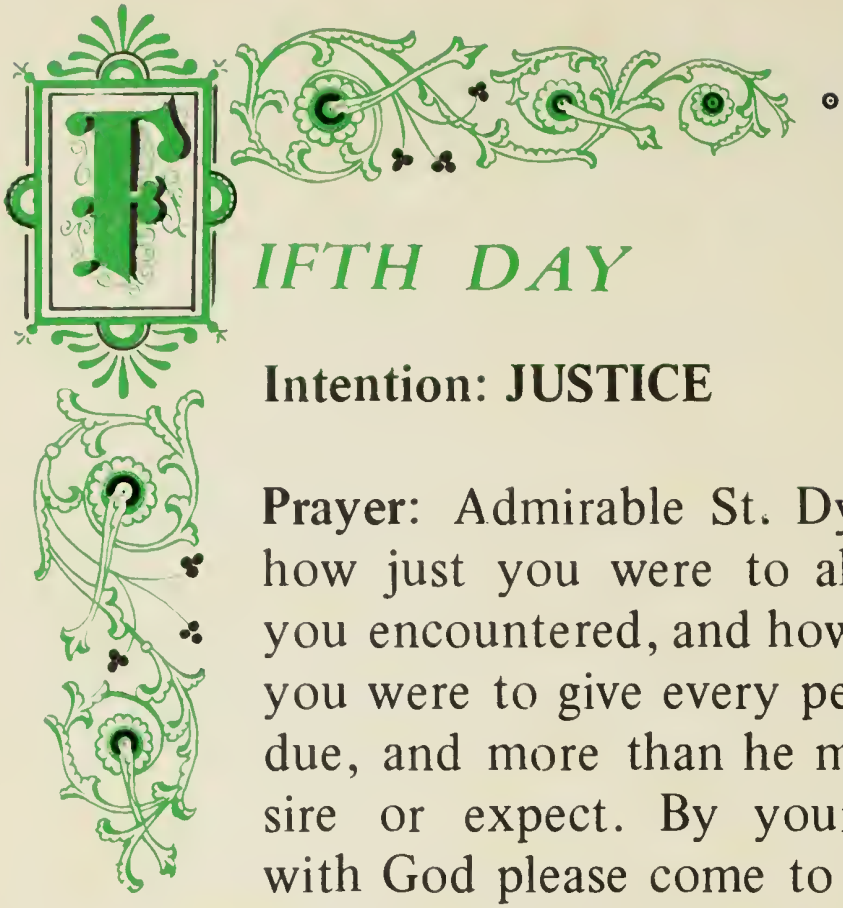
Intention: PRUDENCE

Prayer: You were marked in life, St. Dymphna, by a high degree of prudence. You sought and followed the advice of your confessor and spiritual guide. You fled from temptation even when it meant exile and poverty. In your last extremity you chose to die rather than offend God. Please help us now by your merits not only to know what is right, but procure for us also the strength to do it. *Amen.*

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

Thought: Prudence does not mean excessive caution or inaction; it means doing the reasonable thing promptly.

Practice: In perplexity turn to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to give you His gift of counsel.



FIFTH DAY

Intention: JUSTICE

Prayer: Admirable St. Dymphna, how just you were to all whom you encountered, and how careful you were to give every person his due, and more than he might desire or expect. By your power with God please come to assist us to be just to all we meet, and even to be generous in giving everyone more than strict justice requires. *Amen.*

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

Thought: St. Joseph is described in the Gospels as a "just" man, one who was selfless in thinking first of God's will, next of his neighbors, and least of himself and his convenience.

Practice: Honor St. Joseph and St. Dymphna by trying today not to think of your own wishes at all.

SIXTH DAY

Intention: TEMPERANCE

Prayer: Generous St. Dymphna, like all Christ's martyrs you gained this crowning grace because you prepared for it by a life of self denial. By faithfulness in smaller things you were ready for your final trial. Please teach us by your example and help to use the good things of life so that we may not miss our chance for life eternal. Help us, too, to watch and pray for ourselves and others. *Amen.*

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

Thought: By temperance we learn to prefer God's will in all things, and we deny ourselves lawful pleasures for His sake.

Practice: Do everything today, both the pleasurable and disagreeable, for God's honor and glory.

SEVENTH DAY

Intention: FORTITUDE

Prayer: Courageous St. Dymphna, your strength was from God. His grace enabled you to resist evil, and to prefer exile to a life of sinful luxury. Christ's own power preserved you faithful to Him in life and in death. In your kindness help us to imitate your example in little things, and gain for us fortitude to bear with the misfortunes we meet, and strength to overcome our weakness. *Amen.*

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

Thought: Learn to lean on God's strength, and not on your own weak will and faltering purpose.

Practice: Resolve today to let God guard, guide, and protect your interests. If you are faithful to Him today, you will see how He will not neglect you.

EIGHTH DAY

Intention: CHASTITY

Prayer: Most pure virgin, St. Dymphna, we live at a time when many are intent on satisfying every carnal appetite. Your single-minded dedication to Christ alone is providential and inspiring. Please help us by your power with God to see life in proportion as you did. With your aid we propose to perform all our actions for a pure motive, and promptly to resist all our evil inclinations. *Amen.*

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

Thought: Our life is much happier when we are single-minded, and do not allow ourselves to be distracted by vain thoughts and impossible desires.

Prayer: Resolve to live this one day for God alone in honor of St. Dymphna.

NINTH DAY

Intention: PERSEVERANCE

Prayer: Most faithful St. Dymphna, you remained true to your baptismal promises to the very end. You are, therefore, honored, known, and loved after 1,400 years by people you have aided all over the world. We do not know how long or short a time is left to us of this life here, but help us in any case to be faithful to God to the end. Please gain for us the grace to live one day at a time as if each were to be our last. *Amen.*

Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be.

Thought: To love God as St. Dymphna did is very simple. You need change nothing of what you do except to avoid sin, and to do everything for love of God.

Practice: Only God can help you to love Him more, and to love Him to the end. Ask His help and St. Dymphna's every morning of your life.

ST. DYMPHNA'S STORY

The girl-martyr whom we honor lived more than 1,400 years ago. St. Dymphna was the only child of a pagan king who ruled a section of Ireland in the Seventh Century. Her mother, who had been a Christian, died while she was very young. It was her remarkable resemblance to her mother that led eventually to her martyrdom.

Her father's mind was unhinged by grief over the sudden loss of the wife he dearly loved. When his court pressed him to marry again, he agreed, finally, on the condition that the new bride should resemble his first wife.

The king's envoys and retinue were unsuccessful in the search for a living replica of the dead queen. In desperation they at last suggested that the king marry his own daughter to which the monarch agreed.

St. Dymphna, as a devout follower of Christ, refused to go along with the idea despite entreaties, flattery, and even threats. Having succeeded in obtaining a delay, Dymphna eventually sought safety in exile. She fled by sea on the advice of her confessor, Gerebern, who accompanied her and her two servants.

The refugees landed at Antwerp in Belgium, and settled in a small village, Gheel, close to a shrine dedicated to St. Martin of Tours. Not many months later the king and his retinue of soldiers traced St. Dymphna's party, and came to seize them.

When the king arrived, he made further

promises and added threats. To weaken his daughter's resolve, the king ordered her old confessor killed. In his fury at her obstinacy the king ordered her slain. When no one in his company had courage to take her life, the king cut off his daughter's head.

St. Dymphna's name appears in the Roman Martyrology where she is venerated each year along with her confessor, on May 15.

In Gheel in Belgium, the devotion to St. Dymphna continues to this day. Over the centuries the place of her martyrdom became a center of pilgrimage for people seeking relief from nervous disorders. Many come to live near her shrine where they are sheltered and cared for in the homes of the inhabitants. The years have witnessed many cures, and thousands report that they have received relief through the intercession of St. Dymphna.

In our day there is a greater awareness of the causes of psychological illness. The tensions and increased pace of modern life have accounted for a much greater number of people suffering from mental and emotional afflictions. Still, there is no certain therapeutic treatment. St. Dymphna's story has become better known, and she is increasingly venerated as a special patroness of those so afflicted. Many have obtained help as result of fervent prayer to God in her honor.

The St. Dymphna Devotion, as sponsored by Franciscan Mission Associates, includes the following spiritual benefits.

A perpetual novena to St. Dymphna is conducted every Monday evening throughout the year in our seminaries by young men aspiring to the priesthood.

The sacrifice of the Mass is offered each week also for all who take part in this devotion.

A solemn Mass is offered twelve times each year at the principal shrine of St. Dymphna in Gheel, Belgium, the place of the Saint's martyrdom.

A double Novena of Masses in petition and thanksgiving takes place each year in conjunction with the feast of St. Dymphna on May 15.

Your petitions will be included in all our prayers and devotions to invoke the aid of St. Dymphna for

- help in the recovery of anyone who may be so afflicted,
- assistance in times of special emotional stress,
- aid in recovering health of mind and peace of soul for all in need.

Offerings you send in honor of St. Dymphna in petition and in thanksgiving are used among the poor on our Franciscan missions in Central America.

Your charity thus assists the sick and suffering there by supplying food, medicines, the staffing of clinics, and by providing surgical equipment and supplies. Your goodness also makes possible the distribution of vitamins and diet supplements.

The children of the missions, the missionaries, and all their people pray daily in gratitude for your intentions.

All gifts and offerings will be personally acknowledged by Fr. Bernard, O.F.M.

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